

## Interview with Atelier Ten's Nico Kienzl | Transcript

Welcome ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to Green Building Matters. The podcast that matters for green building professionals learn insight in green buildings. As we interview today's experts in LEED and WELL. We'll learn from their career paths, war stories and all things green because green building matters and now our host and yes, he has every LEED and WELL credential. Here's Charlie Cichetti.

Charlie ([00:33](#)):

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Charlie ([00:58](#)):

Yes. Hi everyone. Welcome to the next episode of the green building matters podcast. I'm your host Charlie Cichetti. I'm joined today by a LEED fellow out of New York city. A really great green building career. Can't wait to talk to one of the directors at Atelier Ten and Nico Kienzl. Nico. How are you doing today? Doing Well, how are you? Fantastic. We're still recording this in the middle of the pandemic. So it is wild times, strange times out there. Hopefully you and your team haven't been too impacted. You know, I want to always take us back though. Where did you grow up and where'd you go to school?

Nico ([01:33](#)):

So I grew up in Munich in Germany, went to school there, high school went to university there right after school. That's where I grew up. I think a lot of my journey comes from that background mindset growing up in that context. I'm from Atlanta, Georgia from Georgia, but you know, we've always heard if you grew up in Europe, maybe you were raised a little more resourceful, a little more sustainability. I mean, did you have some of that in your upbringing there?

Nico ([02:02](#)):

Yeah, I do think sort of, it was called like that then the seventies, eighties when I was growing up. But I think there's a fundamentally different understanding of land use and resource use in Europe, just by the fact that it's a much higher average density. The land has been cultivated for a long time. And so I think we, Europeans are one hand, always have seen the natural world as something that needs to be managed and protect and is a limited resource. Unlike what I think America is blessed with was wide open land that relatively recently and has been developed and has been living in a land of abundance. I think that that mindset it's been very different. I think the other one is just the density and history of Europe, I think just has made it much more necessary for people to realize on the stand, how close we all in the link and how close our actions affect others.

Nico ([02:55](#)):

I think one of the big turning points also in Europe has been kind of like the big nuclear active disaster, which happened basically on the front steps of central Europe. And it really, I think, affected people in a major way to realize that an energy related disaster would have massive health impacts for all of Europe. And so I think there's a couple of these points that I think just deeply in the mindset.

Charlie ([03:21](#)):

I'm really glad you give us those two anecdotes because you're right. That both of those make a lot of sense. They really do. All right. So coming out of Munich, you've got some amazing universities next to your bio. So tell us about your thought process about going further with your schooling. What brought you to the States?

Nico ([03:48](#)):

I was really, really fortunate on my journey. I went to a public high school in the suburbs and this high school had a high school exchange program was Wellesley High outside of Boston in Wellesley. I was one of the high school students that had like a three week long high school exchange. When I was like 16, I made good friends with the family and I'm still very close with them after all these years with my host family. And so got to kind of, I first had insight into what's going on in America, seeing America and being

fascinated by it was always in school, interested in physics and how things work. My parents are both really handy. My mom, more artistic, my dad, more engineering leaning. So I was always interested in how things work together and both the creative side. So it's kind of a natural position. In Germany, schooling is very different, basically after high school, go to university and decide a professional career track. Most of German schooling is unlike a liberal arts college. It is kind of been very professional very early on.

Nico ([04:34](#)):

I think, Hey, architecture sounds fun as a little bit of engineering as a little bit of art. I got into the technical university of Munich and enjoyed the program there, but through my time there always follow it to my host daughter's progress in America and college with schools in America. I was interested in spending some time abroad for schooling. When I finished my architecture degree, I was really interested in doing this in the US. I first thought I'm going to go right after my graduation of professional degree was over in Germany and do a kind of a year abroad in the US and the way the schooling system works, just that wasn't a really good fit to go somewhere for short stay. Brand new schools really want you to come for the full program so I actually got a job in Munich while I tried to figure things out, worked for two years, meaning as an architect entry level architect firm, that was very interested in sustainability called is called Thomas Health partners.

Nico ([05:32](#)):

He was one of the German stars of high, like a more high tech descendant of ms. Funder Roy with the, with the environmental bent. So we did some beautiful buildings and he got to be more interested in that side of the technical and sustainability side. That then shaped what programs I looked for in the United States. I looked at a number of schools in the US and to come over and was really to get into the building tech program at MIT. The masters of science and buildings and technology at MIT had a great experience. They are focused on building enclosures and building facades, partly because that is, I think one of the most visible intersections between architecture and engineering, and those are really interested in kind of new building materials, how the enclosure affects energy efficiency. And so I did that in my master's degree and had a great time.

Nico ([06:26](#)):

MIT was an awesome place and super supportive. It was a tiny program. Our building tech class was four students. We had a lot of resources and really fun into action. And while I was doing that, I took a class up the road at the GSD at Harvard, with a professor there, Michelle Addington, who was really interested in smart materials and sustainability, her background was in engineering as well. So while I was wrapping up my masters, I was trying to figure out what to do next. This kind of logical step was to spend some time in the US for years. So afterwards to get some work experience. And everybody I talked to was telling me, this was like 1999, the architects would telling me you're overqualified to work in an architecture firm. We don't need somebody with a building tech degree.

Nico ([07:14](#)):

The engineering folks were telling me, you're still not an engineer. I was like, figured out what I really wanted to do. So Michelle Addington asked me, whether I would be interested in continuing the work that I started at MIT with her at the GST and do the doctorate of design program. My advisor at MIT was leaving at the time for a position elsewhere. So it allowed me to transition to continue what I was doing at the GST. So did the Adidas program, and they're shifted more to it's a simulation site, like at MIT was very hands on. I built a prototype of an facade panel and all the other stuff I could get my hands on. At the GST, it was really about like, how do you then stop modeling and just quantifying this simulation

Charlie ([08:00](#)):

That must have really locked in that next path then, because you knew you wanted to get into sustainability. I mean, green buildings, high performance buildings. Was it starting to get a little clear for you? I did want to ask though, Nico, go back to the architecture firm in Germany where you first worked, did the fact they did sustainability attract you there, or you didn't know that that was a nice bonus until you started working?

Nico ([08:22](#)):

It was a combination of things. I've always been really interested in how things work and their architecture was very technical. I liked the idea that the technology was focused on something I could identify with, with the idea of making building more efficient, more environmentally friendly. It was definitely attractive, but it was also to be honest, but also the fact that they

were really one of the hottest ticket in town. They were doing amazing projects and it was really, it was really interesting. I do think that the side of me coming to the US, so the sustainability, it was really part of the experience. I had a great experience working in those two years. This was super intense. I mean, this was like the classic architecture coming out of school, like pushing 80 hour, weeks, weeks and weeks at a time.

Nico ([09:11](#)):

And I realized that I got really into developing the concepts of closures and figuring out how things work, coordinating with the engineers, putting it all together. However, the weeks I spent drawing tiling diagrams for bathrooms or figuring out stair details bored the hell out of me. I also had experience. I was really lucky in that. I worked on two very, very fast moving projects in my two years there. I saw a lot while another group in the office worked in a huge administrative headquarters complex. That team, I think spent almost the entire two years in schematic design and then that project stalled and looked like it might not go forward. So part of this decision to maybe go more towards the kind of a technical side and shift from a classic architectural world, I think had to do with the realization that I really liked being in a role where I can influence many things and that I don't necessarily have the patience to kind of get, not that I can't get deep on something like that, but if I want to get deep on something like that needs to be really meaningful and I want to see outcomes. And so I think that the shift to consulting in the end or academia or something technical was something that was a realization.

Nico ([10:16](#)):

That's been fulfilling for you to go back. We'll talk about it a minute ad junk or lecture and really give back to the universities. Tell us a little bit about along the way, and maybe even in your firm, have you had any mentors, is there one that maybe has opened some doors for you or maybe just something that influenced you that you looked up to? Well, I think that there were many mentors along the way. I think there was clearly at the architecture firm I work with the project manager that I was under. I think a great influence because I could just see somebody who had true mastery of their craft. I mean, somebody who could sketch a building and while they're doing concept sketches already in his mind and split sets, and second has figured out, Hey, I need to figure out drainage from how's this going to work and how I'm going to deal with speculation.

Nico ([11:13](#)):

What's the materiality of things, just like great master of craft that I think something that was really influential. I do think that at the university a lot of my influences came from my classmates. Like people I thought that had similar curiosity and just really wanting to push themselves. My advisor at MIT, Crystal commen r is now with Arab was great because he was very his approach really like this is your time to explore what do you want to do? His openness allowing me to explore what I wanted to, but I was very passionate about was great. And then Michelle Addington the GST was a great influence because she had amazing academic rigor. Apart from becoming a close friend and being a wonderful human being, she just, she and Ben Shodec who was my other reader, just had great clarity and in a really positive way, being able to ask questions, like what do you really know?

Nico ([12:14](#)):

Why do you say this? How do you move forward? So I think all of them were great influences. And I think over the last years, since I joined until year 10, I think definitely Justin, our founder has been a great influence as somebody who is both technical and creative at the same time, and really passionate about the mission of what we're doing around the environment and wanting to share that knowledge and that experience.

Charlie ([12:40](#)):

Mentors ask the best questions will tell us about Atelier Ten for someone that doesn't know about your firm. I know you're international, but tell us a little bit about the firm and your journey there last 18 years.

Nico ([13:06](#)):

Atelier Ten is a environmental design consulting and building services engineering firm. We started, or the firm started around 30 years ago in the UK. Patrick Value, the founder is a mechanical engineer who came out of BASS an engineering program there. A program that was really from the very beginning, put architects and engineers basically in the same studio, which I think was really, it's really still visible in the practice today. So Patrick was one of the first mechanical engineers to join Apple, then a couple of other things before venturing out on his own. He always was really

interested in not only doing the classic mechanical engineering scope of sizing, the ducts and formulas, but to really question, why is the building performing the way it is? How does the architecture affect the performance and how can engineers be real partners in engineering, in building design? And so the practice had grown in the UK first for some smaller commissions with high design architects, then very quickly helping London-based architects on international competitions and schemes.

Nico ([13:59](#)):

And that just started to do some really interesting larger scale international work. Like we did a shading design for the concert hall in Singapore. We did the mass design for museum in Australia, all of that with UK off. So that was kind of a step change about to happen. And I met Patrick when he came to the GST to give a guest lecture, and I was really interested with the work that they were doing. It just happens that a month later, six months later, so Atelier Ten was starting to set up a US presence. Patrick had given a lecture also Yale and Robert Stone was really interested in getting him to teach at Yale, to do some work in the US. One of my partners who was an American architect, who was working for Atelier Ten in London, started flying back and forth.

Nico ([14:48](#)):

At that point finished at the GST was trying to figure out what to do next. I had a couple of options and offers on the table going into academia or going to a large architecture firm as the technical director at that time. But the opportunity with Atelier Ten was really to be at something from the ground up. So I joined Atelier Ten the second staff member in New York. It was really a situation where I walked into the office we shared at that point was a structural engineering firm. And Paul, the American, who is my age, came from the UK back in the US handed me a credit card and said, okay, here's your first day, buy yourself a computer and figure out how we registered a company in the United States, because we need to do this for your visa. Our London partners were great because they provided us support and resources, but they let us be.

Nico ([15:39](#)):

They realized that the modern American market was very independent and that we needed to kind of like sink or swim on our own if that was going to

be a business that moved forward. Patrick was flying back and forth every couple of weeks to do teach at Yale and swing by New York, Paul and I really built the US business. This was 2002, we've grown organically, but very quickly up to the 2008 recession, which at that point we had just decided to open an office in San Francisco. We had sent Claire Maxfield from our New York office out there to set that up. We had already merged with a group in New Haven where we had the small lighting studio. And so we got through the 2008 big recession it was not fun times, but we actually stayed level in terms of the number of people who have since grown significantly. Our 80 people in the United States, providing environmental design consulting and lighting design in the US

Charlie ([16:28](#)):

Really specialty, right. That's what I've seen your team on that just of course you can do LEED consulting, WELL, FitWEL and others, but really known for the really advanced modeling. Would you say that the daylight modeling the high performance buildings? What do you want to be known for in the marketplace, Nico?

Nico ([16:54](#)):

Well, I think what we want to our mission is to shape a more sustainable world and I think we want to see ourselves in the market as the ones leading the charge. We are working primarily with clients who come to us or want us to be on their team, to do new things, to push the envelope, to have to expand what they're doing. And so by definition, that means we often doing things that are non traditional need more analysis because it hasn't been done before.

Nico ([17:24](#)):

That goes across the whole range. I think that goes across, as you mentioned, daylighting and facades, but also obviously the energy side and the system side, which builds mechanical engineering heritage in the UK, but also increasingly looking at modern energy and buildings with healthy materials and all of this solid, I would say our core work is really what we call environmental design, which is loose catch all term for all of that kind of thought leadership and analysis. We obviously do very, very deep analysis around energy systems. We do all of the benchmarking services partly because allows us to stay engaged in the project up to the end. It's a lot of



our staff like me come out of an architectural background and get a real kick out of walking through the finished building and actually being part of that entire journey and not just doing some analysis in the front end.

Nico ([18:16](#)):

And then we do full service lighting design on projects because lighting is interesting because it's really shifted from something where we say, Oh, well, our specialty, or we are really good at doing low energy lighting to something that has shifted much, much more about like human centric. High-Performance lighting that, understanding how it impacts health and wellbeing. In addition to being really something that just transforms the architecture and the experience.

Charlie ([18:39](#)):

I'm WELL and FITWEL and circadian rhythm and all of that. Getting a lot of attention now on the white side, let's look back on your career, but you know, what some of your proudest achievements, I think the proudest achievement on some level, well, I think there's a couple of things. I think one of them is clearly to see the amazing group of people we've assembled and has grown together too. I think really provides a unique place of collaboration and thought leadership in the industry.

Nico ([19:15](#)):

We've been very fortunate. A lot of the people we've hired straight out of school have been with us now for 10 plus years. And there's a real sense of camaraderie throughout the group. It's also, I think quite unique is that we've been able to do that and to grow quite significantly than nationally. We are now close to 300 people internationally with 10 offices around the world, but a lot of the people in these offices have spawned off other offices. And so there's a very close relationship between people. So Paul who started, the US with me has been in Australia for five years and we worked closely with them in Sydney and Melbourne who started in New York is now running off. As in Bangkok, we have a lot of back and forth office London. And so we able to really some part is this personal fulfillment of having just a great group of people to work with.

Nico ([20:06](#)):

We're passionate about the mission of moving the industry. I think the other thing is just the general sense of how we have shaped what's going on in our space. When we started in 2002, what really got us onto to project is that people said, Oh, the client that wants to do LEED and that was a loop. We got to go LEED silver, maybe LEED gold, but that has really become a baseline. Now we having conversations with clients about how do we net zero buildings? How do we need to do carbon neutral buildings? How do we do buildings that have zero waterways conversations to the 18 years ago, people would have just laughed you out of the room or you would have done a little nature center somewhere. Now we're doing this on like million square foot being able to show through successful project after project, that all of this is really a realistic something that can be done. I think it's just the success of individual projects. There's projects I thought turned out beautifully that I'm passionate on working on that. It's been really rewarding

Charlie ([20:55](#)):

Yeah. That's a really big reach and I can tell you, you must be not just an entrepreneur with our firm, but you're a leader Irish awesome people. That's amazing. Another one or two projects that really stand out that you want to kind of call out just briefly highlight. It's the hard part about being a consultant is that over the last 18 years, I've, must've worked on close to a thousand projects and it's a little bit like asking what who's your favorite child. I think that our projects that are really standing out, we've done a wonderful project for the GSA in Florida, which is a FBA headquarter building down there.

Nico ([21:48](#)):

It's just a fantastic, was a fantastic collaboration where we were part of the original competition. It was really about like the massing of the building, that the way the landscape basically reimagines Everglades ecosystem, not only for stormwater management, but actually also security of barrier. It's beautiful. The building facade is fantastic. The building is very, very energy efficient as a double LEED platinum project generates 40% of its electric energy out of its PBRA onsite. So I think that was a fantastic project to work on. We're doing a series of buildings right now. I have been for many years up at MIT and Harvard, and just being able to go back to my Alma Marta and see how we can make a contribution on existing buildings that are getting

renovated in like what we did for MIT 52, where we took a 1930s buildings and really upgraded it and turned it into building the protected its heritage.

Nico ([22:48](#)):

But at the same time really created a new standout academic space. And I think of the ongoing projects, again, it's a wide range, but the American Museum of Natural History we're working on with Jeannie gang right now is a fantastic project. Just for many reasons. I think it's wonderful architecture. The genius, the team has created some building that really Nestles in, in a super complex way into the context of the American museum of natural history. And so that's, I think there's a great, those are some of the, I think some of the highlights we're working right now with Jeannie also on the new embassy in Brazil, which was going to be a fantastic architectural gender nests into Brazilians architecture. So this is just kind of like a range of the, of the things that I'm really, excited.

Charlie ([23:45](#)):

That's very helpful and very exciting. So thanks for picking out a few. I know you've had so many, one of my favorite questions Nico to ask my podcast, guests is if you had a crystal ball, What do you think the sustainability, this green building movement is shifting next? What should we be reading up on now?

Nico ([23:51](#)):

Well, I do think that there's a couple of things going to happen. I do think that while the under the current administration clearly environmental protections have suffered, I do think this is going to swing back and given the pressure we are under to act quickly to avoid the worst of climate change. I do think we see it. We will see a rapid increase in activity in this space. I think there's going to be cities like New York City are really the front runners on this. And I think so what happened here with local law 97, where we now work on path for hard carbon emissions cap on buildings is something that will be picked up in many other municipalities very quickly. I think, we are really looking at a decarbonized built environment. And so I do think there's a, the interaction between building the grid that becoming more and more interesting.

Nico ([24:40](#)):

I think architects are gonna need to educate themselves where they are in terms of the dynamics of the utility grid that they're in and the decisions that I'm making within the context. I think what's fascinating is the building design over the years has shifted much what to a mindset that we've seen traditionally in master plan, where you basically said, you got to think long term, you make a decision now, but this is going to live on and transform in a world that has some uncertainties around it. I think buildings are exactly at that space, both from the regulatory context, energy supply side, available technologies. And so what's really fascinating. Fossil was to talk to owners about like, what decisions do you make now? What does it mean for you 5, 10, 15 years down the road. How do you start already planning for change in a much more fundamental

Charlie ([25:32](#)):

Follow up question about embodied carbon cause local one 97 is amazing. It's all about operating carbon, right? Or efficiencies and buildings that have put off some of the transparency and put off some of the retrofits and the retrocommissioning, it's going to catch up to them, right? We'll call on 97. Amazing those listening, just Google that New York city department of buildings local on 97.

Nico ([25:54](#)):

So that's actually the tricky part about this. It took me a long time to figure out New York has a weird transition of not sequentially numbering, all of the local laws, local laws, and getting renumbered every year. So there are many local law, 97, I think it's local law, 97 of 2019, or just look at it like DeBlasio screen reveal or the latest green building.

Charlie ([26:16](#)):

Yeah. Bill 1253 that was passed April 20, 19 year. Right? So we'll, we'll put a link podcast show notes. And so that's operating carbon, which we still have a lot of work to do. Right. But you mentioned your team also knows some embodied carbon models. And so is the shift happening or Nico, what's it going to take for us to really also focus on embodied carbon at a higher level? Maybe it's only one optional LEED point, for example, how are we going to start more on embodied

Nico ([26:44](#)):

Carbon? Assuming that operating carbon is we're getting close to where we need to be. Yeah. I mean, as a comment, I don't think we're even close to where we need to be, but at least we have a plan. We know we need to electrify our buildings and decarbonize our grid. So we have a plan. Materials are a lot harder because I do think in many industry, we don't really have a plan. And for most, for many supply chains, we don't really have a plan yet. I do think that as the building operation carbon use is going down and down and down and bought in carbon is starting to really be the big, big number that we need to worry about. Especially as we are looking at this over the life of a building, it's definitely happening. It's been happening in Europe for a number of years that you start to articulate great energy on bodied, energy as part of human competition entries.

Nico ([27:30](#)):

We see clients in the U S being really interested in doing a lot of work with Google and others on that work already. I think there's a lot of people pushing for code changes and taller timber structures, which is as currently, that's one of the obstacles for going to a really significant shift in a low carbon structure materials that some of the coats are not there yet or preventing you to do from top technically feasible, taller timber structures. We just did. It's definitely possible. We just did the largest academic mass timber building for the university. So the technology is definitely they add more regulatory change, but that is changing. I think that the key, the key point fast release to push the supply side into more transparency. And I think with more transparency, we can get them more optimization. So I do think the work that Bill McDonough started years ago was cradle to cradle or other aspects of transparency.

Nico ([28:31](#)):

I think US has a particular problem. A challenge is that reaches source materials from a watch wider pool than you see in some other more close markets. Even in Europe, it's much easier to do carbon tracing a few materials because you typically buy from a more controlled local market or market that follows the same rules, but I do think it will happen well, thank you for going there with the embodied carbon, but more to do on the operating side. So just a few more rapid fire questions about you when you go, what do you think is your specialty or get, I think I'm pretty good at looking at a problem and breaking it down and prioritizing what's important.

And what's not, I think kind of like look this ability of not getting lost in details, but understand which details matter I think it's something that I hope I'm good at, but I think it's critical for what I do.

Nico ([29:28](#)):

And then the other one is to be, to really being able to communicate things in a way that a meaningful for different stakeholder groups. And it's tricky, a lot of the things we talk about a fairly abstract or fairly technical. And so if you have, we do an academic building, like say, and you have stakeholders ranging from the facilities guy who was like in the nuts and bolts and understands every detail to a grad student or undergrad student who's on a sustainability committee was the first time he has about how building goes together. You need to kind of like bring both of them along the journey to make decisions. I think that is something that I think I'm good at. And we as a firm spend a lot of time on really thinking about how do you communicate both verbally through written reports, but also graphically this kind of often very abstract information. So those are two great skills.

Charlie ([30:19](#)):

Thank you for sharing. These are humbling questions, right? Do you have any best practices, any good habits, any kind of rituals that help you stay productive?

Nico ([30:28](#)):

Oh man. All of these have been gone out the window in the last three months with working from home. It's been a really interesting transformation. I always thought our working from home work, I want to do this. I could work anywhere, but I think one of the things that I realized, how much we as an industry need the creative exchange on are kind of like very easy, ongoing way. And so I love the type of studio culture that a lot of design and engineering firms would be definitely sharing, but you can just very quickly bounce ideas around and see what's going on. So being working from home has definitely been a hard transition. I'm not sure that I have good rituals around this, except for like communicate, communicate, communicate, and being sure that I'm in touch with, with my team and the people I work with very closely. I am a fairly organized person. I do spend a lot of time on kind of thinking about the meta of the systems that I'm using or how I optimize

now inbox and stuff like that. Just to manage flows of information, to track of things.

Charlie ([31:31](#)):

Oh, absolutely. That's a good trait to have and over communicate, especially here during the work from home in the, in the pandemic and hopefully you'll get back to those good habits. Soon when you get back to the studio and collaboration now, you know, Nico, as we get to know each other more, I'm a fan of the bucket list is there one or two things on your bucket list? Maybe some adventure salvo, maybe write a book who knows one or two things on your bucket.

Nico ([31:56](#)):

It's interesting. I don't think I have a bucket list. I always think like if you put something off into the future, it's too big a chance you don't get to it. So like planning, I think one of my like lessons learned life is that you have to have general values and ideas of where you want to go. And then just being flexible to respond to the opportunities as they present. So I'm planning too far ahead with some of these things, but I do want us to, I do think I have some personal bucket list items I would love to. I love to travel and I have two small daughters and I think definitely I'm looking forward to they're seven years now. I'm looking forward to when they're like in their teens, when I can travel with them and show them parts of the world where I think seeing, I know that flying around the globe has got a really bad rep in recent years and for good reasons. But I do think being able to most yourself in different cultures and seeing places that are different than what you're used to is an absolutely vital part of kind of like understanding the world we live in better. So I think my bucket list is most probably are on travel.

Charlie ([33:05](#)):

That's common. I interviewed Mahesh, so you'll have to listen to his podcast to see where he wants to travel and meditate. Let's do more questions there, books. I don't know if you like to listen to books on audio or read a book, pick it up in your hands, but maybe some publications, but is there a book you'd recommend?

Nico ([33:26](#)):

I have to say for which might be surprising for somebody in my role, but I have a really hard time with nonfiction books. I've been, I had a major in like German literature in high school. I love literature and I get very quickly bored with nonfiction books. So a lot of my reading is more kind of like in journal papers or technical reports. I don't have a great recommendation. I think the one book and maybe it's because it's short, but I think the, one of the most influential books for me is still Lisa Heschong, Thermal Delight in Architecture, which I think talks about this intersection between kind of like the building physics and our experience of architecture. And I think that is a beautiful book to just make ourselves aware that all of these energy discussions we're having daily discussions we have in a fundamentally about the quality of our experience, the buildings be occupied. And so I think that this most probably one of my, one of my most cherished books,

Charlie ([34:28](#)):

The link in the podcast show notes. Thanks. Alright. As we come to a close two part, question one, is there anything you wish you had known earlier in your career?

Nico ([34:38](#)):

Oh, so many things. I think the interesting thing for me is what I've learned over the years is the importance of relationships and that a lot of the things, I mean, everybody says building industry is different than designing a car where we, because every building is a prototype. And I think what that, what I learned over the years is how that fundamentally means the trust in our design team is incredibly important because everybody's taking risks all the time because nobody's ever done this before. So the importance of personal relationships and really being aware of that and understanding stakeholders like people I work with I'm on the client side at a deeper level. That's something that I think is incredibly important. The more I practice, the more I realize that. And I think it's just something that I think is really amazing. And I see a lot of people come out of school with great technical skills who think they can revolutionize the world through technical prowess, but it is you need technical powers, but you also really need to have this kind of like social skills to build trust and build relationships

Charlie ([35:50](#)):



A hundred percent agree. Well, let's say there's someone listening to this podcast right now that is maybe just now getting into the green building room. Maybe they're studying for the LEED green associate exam. Maybe they are graduated from college and they really think they want to get into green building. So any words of encouragement for them?

Nico ([36:08](#)):

Yeah. I mean, I do think that the, this is a huge, this is our world. This is the defining crisis, the climate crisis defining emergency of our time. I think this will be transformational for basically every industry, every professional. So I do think being aware of what's going on, be involved in that I think is really important. I do think that for somebody who gets into this space to be mindful that all of this though needs to be integrated in great architecture, great kind of general professional experience because nothing even the most sustainably built building and most efficient building will be an environmental failure. If it is not a functional building that is cherished and beloved by the people use because I mean, I've worked on projects where we taking down 20 year old buildings because they are not fit for that time anymore. You just stylistically or functionally.

Nico ([37:04](#)):

And it had nothing to do with the materials or the systems it just had to do with the fact that the architecture was wrong. So I do think somebody who gets into the building movement, I think a big part about it is to understand what questions to ask and who to collaborate with and not to this field is so complicated and it's getting more complex every day. The thought that one could get into this and know it all is a fool's error. So a lot of it is about how do you team up with people? What questions do you ask? How do you, how do you collaborate? And then being very clear about what is, what is your contribution? And often your contribution. If you're a young architect, could be to be the best designer and homes of taking that information that's available to then create great architecture.

Charlie ([37:46](#)):

Great, great Sage advice. I mean, you've had an incredible green building career and I love just the leadership, the entrepreneurship you communicate, you kind of walked us through and some of the early sustainability influence you had coming out of Germany. So for everyone, this

has been Nico Kinzel director at Atelier Ten check them out, connect with them on LinkedIn and Nico. Thanks for being on the podcast.

Nico ([38:11](#)):

Thank you so much for having me. This was fun.

Speaker 6 ([38:14](#)):

I just want to say thank you to our loyal listeners. We actually are celebrating over one year here on the green building matters podcast. Me and the entire team are stoked. And just so glad to continue to listen every Wednesday morning to a new interview with a green building professional here in this industry, or just some pro tips that we want to make sure that you are getting straight from us straight to you. Thank you for listening to this episode of the green building matters [projects@gbs.com](mailto:projects@gbs.com). Our mission is to advance the green building movement through best in class education and encouragement. Remember, you can go to [gbs.com/podcast](http://gbs.com/podcast) for any notes and links that we mentioned in today's episode. And you can actually see the other episodes that have already been recorded with our amazing, yes. Please tell your friends about this podcast, tell your colleagues, and if you really enjoyed it, leave a positive review on iTunes. Thank you so much. And we'll see you on next week's episode.